826 immortal with smooth limbs, he became mortal and hard working. As seats of the male semen, they transmit this condition to the embryo, formed in the maternal womb by Faro. The weariness felt in the limbs after the sexual act is proof of this transmission. As Locus of [829] the virile semen, framework of the man, and a mechanism suitable for physical labor, the articulations are also the symbol of society. The chief's throne, in the shape of a knee, is the image of its owner's articulated body as well as that of the armature of the social body and of the grouping of individuals under his jurisdiction (1).

1. See p. 178.

826 The limbs represent the right and the left. Rectitude, firmness,
823 and directed action are "right"; incertitude, the spirit of indecision,
201 and inconsistency in behavior are "left." The right is male and symbolizes man's labor; the other is female. All gestures, profane and religious, and all representations of objects bear witness to this. Performing his first task in the fields before the rain, the farmer gives three blows with his hoe held in his left hand in order to absorb the impurity of the earth. After this, he works until the harvest with his right hand. To cross one's hands means supplication, to put them behind one's back means humiliation.

826 Each finger has its value. The little finger, bolokoni lakare, is
201 "the son of the other fingers" and in it is concealed the entire
576 strength of the hand; it "carries the nyama of the fingers." Hence its use as a measure of divinations. To point to someone with one's little finger means to belittle him with respect to those present. Thus one casts a spell (korti) against an enemy or an undesirable person with the little finger.

826 The index finger and the thumb of a chief, formerly those of a
622 king, are marked on certain occasions with signs called bolo ti doniya, "knowledge of the signs of the hand." On the index are drawn three "acts of the world today" (bi dyɛ̃ walew) and on the thumb, two "things of the interior of the secret world" (dyɛ̃ gundo kono fɛ̃w), for it is said that "the knowledge of the signs of the hand /70/ is the road of the creation 5, the index is the world in 3 and the thumb is the new world" (1). The whole represents the worlds thought out by

1: Dieterlen--137 E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8

/98/

Chapter 5

TECHNOLOGY

T13 The Bambara who are conscious of the evolution of their civilization trace it far back in time. The history of their origin as well as the feats and exploits of their most distant ancestors are not only inscribed in their memories but also in present day ceremonies and often in the material products of the culture, secular as well as religious.

The invention and evolution of technology, in the course of which the spiritual and the material, revelation and human effort, all work together, give rise to legends and representations which are characteristic of Bambara psychology (1).

> 1. What we relate here concerning the origin of technology is exclusively a summary of what the natives tell. The context, in the form of practical daily rituals, of which the forge is the best example, is sufficient and requires no commentary.

According to Bambara thought, all technology is an atonement taught man by Faro, a palliative to cosmic disorder, generally induced by a broken taboo. Faming, war, epidemics, misery, and death, which such disorders bring about, are compensated for —as far as possible—by new technologies which are revealed as needs arise. All these exist potentially in the wooden club used to smash and beat the fiber, which was the first raw material used (2).

[171]

> 2. The wooden club is a duplicate of the mythical blacksmith's hammer which contained the techniques and the cultivable grains (see p. 53, n. 1). The same origin of technology is given by the Dogon, see Dieu d'Eau, p. 84.

T13 B29 The first works were made by "primitive men," ancestors of the Bambara of whom the following description is given:

773 "They were covered with shaggy body hair, beard and hair; their 929 long nails resembled claws; their teeth resembled fangs. They knew no language and had no clothing to protect themselves from bad weather; they lived in holes dug in the /99/ ground or in habitable natural caves, at the bottom of which they slept and kept their prey. To defend themselves against wild animals, they placed wooden spikes and pointed rocks at the entrance of these quarters. These deep holes communicated with each other and together formed regular underground villages" (Fig. 6) (1).

[332]

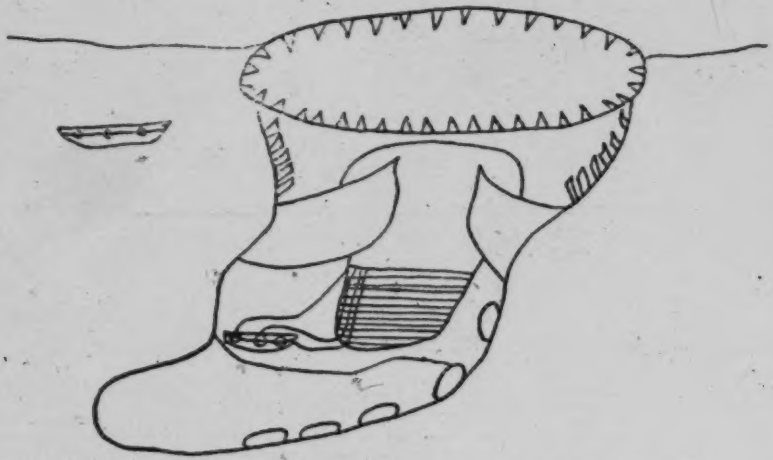

Fig. 6 —Underground home of primitive men. The entrance is guarded by pointed rocks. In the center, the drawing of the first loom invented by men. At the left; the shuttle (see p. 181). (Drawing by an informant.)

[172]

1. Some of these excavations in the neighborhood of Ségou, which may still be visited today, are venerated by the Bambara as ancestral homes.

Since they did not know language these men communicated by means of head gestures, movements of the feet and hands, and grunts. When a difference arose between them, before using their hands they drew back their lips and measured their long canines to determine who the winner would be. "Later they were given language, but

knowing its power, men at first used it sparingly. A question was never discussed twice. If a request was reiterated, after an objection, the party requested would bow and agree at the risk and peril of the person making the request."

Men first lived by gathering and later by fishing and hunting without tools, using only /100/ hands to seize their prey, and nails and teeth to tear and cut it. Gradually this primitive life changed; technologies developed one by one according to a chronology which the present Bambara still remember.

The first raw material used, according to a tradition which is not confined to the Bambara alone, was the fiber of the nyama tree (1)

1. Bauhinia reticulata (in the north), Bauhinia Thonningii (in the south).

(nyama fu) out of which were woven the first fishing nets, the first sling, and the first loincloth (2).

2. The Dogon also mention this fiber as the first material used by men. With them as with the Bambara, it has a ritual function. See M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, p. 26.

When they began to work the soil, they developed a set of primitive wooden tools. At the same time, they invented a throwing weapon made of the same material. Wood remained in use for a long time; the invention of weaving and crude pottery goes back to this period. Later, they came to know stone tools, iron, and the forge. The art of house building, about which no myth has been gathered until now, seems to have developed much later, after the discovery of iron (3).

3. Certain parts of the investigation concerning technology have been summarized by the author in "l'Arme et l'outil chez les anciens Bambara /Weapons and Tools among the Ancient Bambara/," Africa, Vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 105-111.

The study of this assemblage of tools and of their ritual use is most suggestive because they are a first indication of technological

776 They are the necessary intermediaries between man and the Divinity, and since each has absolute authority in its sphere. The black man must appeal to them first of all in all his needs. Consequently, these spirits have assumed a dominant place in the Negro mind to the detriment of God.

776 829 Every djiné can appear in human form, and when it does so it wears a white skin and his appearance does not differ from that of a European. Many a time I have heard women, young girls, and children whisper behind me: "A gné dé djémé wala-wala déren! a boloou be iko djiniou ta tjoko, ne bi siran, He has white eyeballs! his arms are like those of the genii, I am afraid...." This seems strange and leads one to think that this concept developed after the arrival of white men whom, not without reason, they regard as being superior to them in every way. However, I believe that it antedates our arrival. The old Bambara who told me that Mage and Quintin, held prisoners at Segou by King Amadou (أحمدو) until the death of his father, Omar el Hadj (1), were regarded by them as djiné seemed to

1. El-Hadj-Omar, or Omar the Pilgrim, so called because he saw Mecca, was at Ségou around 1835, 1837, or 1839, sometime before the death of Tjéyolo, which occurred around 1839. See Introduction /not translated/.

me sincere, for an old legend states that during in /32/ one of their migrations the Bambara skirted a country inhabited by white men who resembled genii in every way. I might also add that white is the [822] liturgical color in formal sacrifices to the djiné; hens, goats, sheep, even kola nuts -- short of the impossible -- are white in color, undoubtedly because of the people's notion of the color of genii. When traveling Europeans ask their hospitality, they do everything possible to find a white hen to offer them; they believe that this is the way they can most honor their guests because of the color of the latter's skin. The old men think also that we French have intimate

776 contact with the genii and know their family names, or diamou; how-
829 ever little they may be at ease with a Frenchman they will beg him to show them the place where a well should be dug, convinced that we know where live the spirits who are appointed to watch over water. Do we not bear them a certain resemblance?

776 The gnâ, or boli, also are sexed; they reproduce and found families. They are superior to the genii in power and wickedness, and, except indirectly, capable only of evil. They are at open war with God who, without taking away any of their intelligence or liberty, has condemned them tosuffer and to undergo the punishment of fire. They continually set up ambushes against the djiné to make their plans, good or evil, miscarry; they take pleasure in tormenting men, and the Bambara fears them greatly. The worship of the djiné is nothing compared to what is accorded them. Those considered most powerful have an entire retinue to serve them and to render them
[651] honors and, as will be seen later, the head tax of 3.50 francs per head is nothing compared to the sums the Blacks spend to ward off the blows of the boli and avoid their wrath.

Like the djiné, the boli appears in human form, but it is disgusting and hideous to behold. All those upon whom the favor of an appearance is bestowed are frozen with terror; the body of the boli is terrifyingly black, and its face disappears in a flame above which rise horns.

[782 In the sacrifices to the boli the liturgical colors are black and
822] red, and a white victim is never offered except in an indirect sacrifice necessitated by an offering called saraka, which is quite rare./33/

2. Sorcery and Priesthood

152 Surrounded by spirits, by genii always seeking to harm him, a Bambara is quick to believe that he is the victim of one. This attitude contributes more than a little to give him a certain endurance manifested in the face of suffering. I would even say that he usually bears suffering, not with stoicism but with the torpor of an animal.

772 more, to a brother, one of his people? It is more difficult for a Bambara to deserve hell than to avoid it; thus they need not think about it and never do think about it.

Paradise hardly absorbs their thoughts more. The thought that they are called upon to contemplate the Creator, to live near Him and rejoice in Him, has not touched them for a long time; they have evolved too far; they have reached the last runs of degradation, and to go lower they would have to be Moslems. Furthermore, the paradise of Mohammed seems absurd to them! That indecent corps of virgins with modest looks and beautiful black eyes, whose color makes them resemble ostrich eggs carefully hidden in the sand (2), leaves them

2. Koran, Chap. XXXVII - v. 47.

indifferent. They still prefer the ones here below, undoubtedly on the principle /83/ that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" /literally: "one good thing that you have is worth 36 that you will have"/. Virginity is too beautiful for the Bambara to have a word [83] for it; it is the flower of a day which a girl of ten no longer has. And what does it matter to them whether a woman is young or somewhat [562] mature, virgin or not, pretty or ugly; to them a woman, a real one, is a good servant, a good cook, and one who provides carnal pleasure at a man's will without ever tiring.

The pleasures and joys of this earth suffice for the Negro; he wishes for no others, and no doubt that is why he believes in a perpetual return. If, when barely in the grave, he already lives again in the womb of a woman, could the idea of judgment after death, the idea of the end of the world and a new judgment, make an impression on his mind? Can he who lives again and again conceive of the end of the world?

773 It is senseless to speak of their knowledge of Adam, father of the human race, and of Eve, his wife. The Bambara meaning of the 829 words Adama (Adam) and Awa (Eve) are quite different from the one we give them. When a missionary, a Moslem, or any European introduces himself to them as the son of Adam and Eve, these words are to them generic terms denoting the first father and the first mother

773 of a race, but not words that denote the first father and mother of the
829 human species. A pure Bambara does not believe in the unity of mankind; God created the white man white and the black man black, to use his expression, and to each He has given a father and a mother of his own color.

829 Nor has the arrival of the Europeans and the Moslems changed
582 any of his ideas in this respect. For many, each tribe and each caste had a first father and a first mother, and if there are castes which cannot be united by marriage, this seems to me to be the reason. "An té sé, a yé noumoy yé an yé Bamana déou yé an té si (1) kélé-n-yé,

1. Si: "similar" or "like nature;" "of the same race, descent, origin, people, nature."

we cannot marry each other, he is noumou (blacksmith) and we are not of the same people, the same blood, the same stock, the same father." Some seem to me very explicit when they say: "An té fa kélé-n-yé, we are not of the same father." /84/

Chapter 5

000 Fetishism among the Bambara; The Worship of the Gnéna Classification of the Gnéna, Who are Identical with the Arab Djiné

1. What is Meant by Gnéna or Djiné

776 The Supreme Being, the Bambara God, lives up above behind the blue sky, gliding through happy and quiet days with his celestial band, the good angels (méléké) that form His court, and, omnipotent though He is, He is without priest or sacrifice. For He concerns Himself very little with men. He has divided the dominion of creation with the djiné, His laws, which are immutable, He has decreed once